

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CPR-02 H-01 PA-01 SS-15 NSCE-00
/030 R

DRAFTED BY AF/S:KMCCORMICK:DH
APPROVED BY AF/S:LMACFARLANE
-----126747 062323Z /66
O R 062231Z SEP 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MBABANE IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

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FROM AF/S

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, WZ

SUBJECT: HIT AND RUN INCIDENT INVOLVING SWAZI DIPLOMAT

1. ON LABOR DAY A WASHINGTON PEDESTRIAN WAS STRUCK AND SERIOUSLY INJURED BY A CAR IDENTIFIED BY WITNESSES AS BELONGING TO JOSEPH NKUMBULE, FIRST SECRETARY AT THE EMBASSY OF SWAZILAND. ACCORDING TO WITNESSES THE DRIVER TOOK ONE LOOK AT THE VICTIM, RAN A RED LIGHT AND DISAPPEARED. POLICE OFFICERS WHO TRACED NKUMBULE BY THE LICENSE PLATE CALLED THE OPERATIONS CENTER TO REQUEST CONFIRMATION OF HIS CLAIM OF DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY. THEY WERE INFORMED THAT HE WAS IN FACT A SWAZI DIPLOMAT AND DOES ENJOY IMMUNITY.
2. NKUMBULE APPARENTLY DID NOT INFORM HIS AMBASSADOR. AF/S CALLED AMBASSADOR KUNENE EARLY TUESDAY TO WARN THAT

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THE INCIDENT COULD CAUSE SERIOUS ADVERSE PUBLICITY IN LIGHT OF INTENSE RECENT INTEREST IN DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY AND THE PASSAGE BY THE HOUSE OF A BILL TO RESTRICT IT. KUNENE WAS DUMBFOUNDED, BUT ACCEPTED AF/S SUGGESTION THAT HE DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH NKUMBULE, CHECK WHETHER THE CAR WAS INSURED AND NKUMBULE PROPERLY LICENSED, AND CONSIDER TAKING STEPS TO COUNTER ANY IMPRESSION THAT

"DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY" WOULD BE INVOKED TO AVOID FAIR COMPENSATION. KUNENE CALLED BACK TO SAY THAT NKUMBULE DENIED THE INCIDENT, BUT THAT HE, KUNENE, WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE DENIAL. (IT MAY BE POSSIBLE THAT ANOTHER EMBASSY OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE -- POSSIBLY WITHOUT DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY -- WAS DRIVING NKUMBULE'S CAR.)

3. THE STORY WAS CARRIED ON TELEVISION NEWS SEPTEMBER 4 (WITHIN MINUTES OF ITS OCCURRENCE). THE CAR WAS CLEARLY IDENTIFIED AS HAVING DIPLOMATIC TAGS BUT SWAZILAND WAS NOT MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY AS THE LICENSE HAD NOT YET BEEN TRACED. WE EXPECT THE STORY TO SURFACE AGAIN WITH CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL FOR ADVERSE PUBLICITY REGARDING SWAZILAND AND AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS GENERALLY. IT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE AN IMPACT ON PASSAGE OF THE BILL TO RESTRICT DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY, NOW AWAITING SENATE ACTION. DEPARTMENT WILL PUT AMBASSADOR KUNENE IN TOUCH WITH PROTOCOL OFFICERS, WHO HAVE HELPED RESOLVE SIMILAR CASES IN THE PAST, AND URGE HIM TO CONSIDER EX GRATIA COMPENSATION TO THE VICTIM IF THERE IS ANY QUESTION OF LACK OF INSURANCE. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES, TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780996/aaaadbrw.tel
Line Count: 84
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2e66fa56-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1527045
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HIT AND RUN INCIDENT INVOLVING SWAZI DIPLOMAT
TAGS: PGOV, WZ, US
To: MBABANE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2e66fa56-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
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